

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

After the title, please insert the following:

--CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a division of U.S.S.N. 09/825,967 filed April 5, 2001, allowed July 14, 2003.--

Please rewrite the paragraph at page 1, line 30 to page 2, line 3 as follows:

--Industrially actually employed reforming processes are performed at 600-1,000°C with a steam ratio $[H_2O]/[C]$ (ratio of steam to carbon of raw material HC feed) of 2-5. While a lower steam ratio is desired from the standpoint of energy saving, carbon deposition on ~~of~~ the catalyst significantly occurs as the steam ratio becomes lower than 2. A higher steam ratio is needed as CO_2 concentration in the feed gas increases. This problem is encountered in the above-described conventional processes.--

Please rewrite the paragraph at page 2, lines 4-12 as follows:

--EP-A-0974551 discloses a process for producing a synthesis gas by reacting a hydrocarbon with H_2O and/or CO_2 using a catalyst having a specific surface area of $25\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ or less and comprising a magnesium oxide-containing carrier and Rh and/or Ru supported on the carrier in an amount of 0.0005-0.1 mole %, in terms of elemental metal, based on the carrier.

This process is promising because of freedom from ~~of~~ the problem of carbon deposition on the catalyst.--

Please rewrite the paragraph at page 3, lines 23-26 as follows:

--In another aspect, the present invention provides a process for the production of dimethyl ether from a lower hydrocarbon gas and carbon dioxide, comprising the steps of:--